

The Emergency and Public Communication Access Program (EPCAP)

CONCEPT/PROPOSAL PAPER



Submitted By

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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Emergency and Public Communication Access Program

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PREFACE

This proposal is developed by the RICDHH to seek mechanisms and funds to support the Emergency Communication System for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population in Rhode Island. More than 90,000 people living in Rhode Island plus some thousands of people who come to Rhode Island for tourism, businesses, employment, family affairs, etc. are largely underserved by the current Emergency system conducted by the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, Rhode Island Department of Health, Municipal Polices, and other emergency personnel. This proposal also covers public communication access for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing on all state/public properties such as Rhode Island Convention Center, Dunkin Donuts Arena, Providence TF Green Airport, and many more that have limited, or worse, lack of resources provided for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population during emergencies. The program will be called, the ***Emergency and Public Communication Access Program*** and it shall be known as EPCAP.

The program has two parts, Emergency and Public Communication Access:

Emergency Communication Access is the area where the RICDHH ensures that all individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and who utilize English and/or American Sign Language as their language have a full access to emergency information through visual, technology, signals, person-to-person, TV, smartphone, and many more.

Public Communication Access is the area where the RICDHH ensures that public sites especially state-owned properties do have appropriate telecommunication or general communication equipment/devices that will be used by anyone including individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing utilizing either or both English and American Sign Language.

The proposal includes purpose, vision statement, mission statement, legislative bill, budget, how the program is administered, a number of services and programs identified that will be created and supported.

PURPOSE

To improve communication efficiency between emergency personnel and Deaf and Hard of Hearing population;

To ensure that the state properties where the services, programs, and events are held and/or provided are accessible to everyone including Deaf and Hard of Hearing population;

To recognize and respect a special population that uses either or both in English and American Sign Language as their native language;

To provide knowledge, expertise, and funding to support and help achieving the goals and projects established by the RICDHH through collaboration and partnership toward the higher standards of Emergency Communication and Preparedness;

To develop skills and awareness among 1st emergency responders in order to work effectively with individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

To provide consulting and support to the Rhode Island Government, RI Department of Public Safety and other state and public entities to ensure that they are in compliance with the federal and state laws, and;

To maintain high quality, standards, and practices in responding to emergencies in the best interest of people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

VISION STATEMENT

Emergency Communication – the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population that utilize English and/or American Sign Language would receive direct emergency messages instantly and would be empowered to make decisions what to do next during emergencies with this quality of information delivered. They could save lives of others and themselves as quick as possible.

Public Communication – communication and functional equivalent are embraced on any public accommodation facilities where all regardless their hearing status are able to use tele-communication and general communication devices and equipment.

MISSION STATEMENT

To create a latest and accessible statewide emergency communication system for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing to obtain and/or alert instant communication information for their own safety and their educated decision-making in emergency situation through both English and American Sign Language.

To work with the Department of Safety and service providers dedicated to emergency to improve awareness of their obligations to serve the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population in the event of emergency

To recognize and meet Deaf and Hard of Hearing population's communication needs, and to help the State comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act by providing communication access that are accessible to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population when they are on any state properties.

To gain access to public tele-communication and general communication devices/avenues that are compatible with current trends in technology such as ip-based relay, video relay service, CapTel, visual paging service, etc.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In the Southern New England that includes Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, 765,000 people have some degree of hearing loss and they depend on either assistive listening equipment or American Sign Language for communication. In Rhode Island, over 90,000 people have some degree of hearing loss. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – Section 504 and the American with Disabilities Act are clearly the federal mandates that protect their civil, human, and linguistic rights. They are not exactly visible and one-time accommodation like a ramp for people who use the wheelchair. They are required to keep up with technology and to include deaf and hard of hearing people for consideration as part of the statewide plan. Therefore, any Emergency communications created by the State of Rhode Island and Public Accommodations must be totally accessible to all individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing and who utilize English and American Sign Language.

In our society, everything depends on sound. That is a clear disadvantage for a special population with hearing loss because they are victimized by lack of access to audio-based information. The Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing has every intention to ensure that the information and communication are accessible to the special population with hearing loss such as increasing more visual cues rather than audio-based information and increasing more language friendly such as American Sign Language. The RICDHH is actively involved with different entities that have mandates to deliver emergency information out to the public. The State of Rhode Island and emergency responding entities are responsible to reach at least 10% of the population, Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. In fact, there were many opportunities where the federal funds were used for major renovations that would benefit people who are deaf and hard of hearing but almost always, these opportunities were missed. (i.e., airports, emergency management agency, police, towns, etc.)

Almost all natural disasters that have had occurred in the past like hurricanes, historic flooding of 2010 in RI, etc., they failed to provide certain provisions for people who are deaf and hard of hearing especially during emergencies. For example, when the Katrina Hurricane hit Louisiana and Mississippi, thousands of people's home were lost. They had to be relocated to the Superdome in downtown New Orleans. All volunteer-based and State/Federal government groups set up the shelters there by providing cots, foods/drinks, telephones, medicines, etc. At that time, they did not realize that there was a decent number of deaf and hard of hearing people. They were the last group of people who were able to inform their families that they were okay or they needed to be picked up. They were the last group because the telephones were not accessible to them, the televisions are not accessible to them, the public announcement was not accessible to them, mental health counseling was not accessible to them, the insurance representatives were not accessible to them, healthcare professionals were not accessible to them, sign language interpreters were not trained and prepared, and many more. That was truly unfortunate. It was not just poor planning but it is the federal law to include the plans for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

As for Rhode Island, the Historical Flooding of 2010 has taught us a lot. Even though, it was not a major disaster like Katrina many red flags were raised. The local TV News stations failed to provide captioning during Governor Carcieri's Emergency Press Conference as required by the Federal Communication

Commission Regulations and Rules. The towns where the flooding occurred failed to communicate with people who are deaf and hard of hearing. The landlords failed to inform their deaf and hard of hearing tenants when to evacuate and where to go.

In 2006, a large gas explosion and fire occurred. The 911 reversal calls were used to alert people who lived in that area and asked them to evacuate immediately. At that time, that 911 reversal calls were not programmed to reach TTY devices or videophones popularly used by American Sign Language users. Clearly, the deaf and hard of hearing residents would have been badly hit by this big fire simply because of lack of communication but luckily, they were not affected during that time. Still 6 years later today, the 911 reversal call is not accessible to deaf and hard of hearing residents. It is a very big deal because it is required by the federal laws that 911 reversal calls must be accessible to them.

The RICDHH has served on councils and committees to participate in the discussion and planning for emergencies. We intend to improve the system so it will not impact deaf and hard of hearing victims who experience a “double whammy” during emergencies. The RICDHH recognizes that the priority in various plans for the deaf and hard of hearing needs is rarely reaching on the top of the list for various state entities that have million dollar budgets. This was a frustrating experience for the RICDHH and deaf and hard of hearing population for not pursuing them as one of the top priorities. This is partly why the RICDHH seeks the alternative way which they believe it would produce more positive outcomes and successful efforts by establishing the EPCA program supported from the taxpayers’ contributions through surcharges.

That is one of two parts of the program. The other program is Public Communication Access. Today, the only PUBLIC place that is totally accessible to deaf and hard of hearing people who need to make phone calls is at the office of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. It opens at 9am and it closes at 3pm during the weekdays only. Where would deaf and hard of hearing people go to make phone calls after hours during the week and 24 hours on weekends? There are a thousand pay phones that come with volume control available in Rhode Island but they are not accessible to people who use American Sign Language extensively. TTY/TDD, in fact, is a thing of past and it will be extinct in a few years. Videophones are what American Sign Language users use for communication over the phone. It is indeed very popular among ASL users. The public pay phones do not have that technology and there is no way for them to gain access to telephone after hours or on the weekends. Rhode Island Convention Center, Amtrak Train Station, State House, Providence Bus Station, Cranston State Complex, Garrahy State Court building, and a few others need this kind of equipment/device that is compatible with the videophones or ip-based Relay Services. However, nobody is looking at them. The RICDHH will do that under this program.

As part of the program, there are a number of state departments that offer the public “walk-in” service. Department of Motor Vehicles is one of the examples. The fund may be used to purchase the equipment and it will be used for Video Remote Interpreting service where a deaf client can communicate with sign language interpreter via webcam and the interpreter speaks over the phone to the teller and then, vice versa, the teller speaks back to the interpreter and the interpreter signs back to the ASL client through the screen. It would be more efficient especially for collection of taxes need to be

paid for registration, new car, etc. This same goes for the Division of Taxation at the Department of Administration, the Vital Records at the Department of Health, the Unemployment office at the Department of Labor and Training, and many sites that would benefit from this program.

CHALLENGES AND GAPS

EMERGENCY

Katrina Hurricane of 2005 was the most sobering lesson ever learned by everyone in the United States including emergency service providers. While there was very poor coordination of emergency responses between Federal, State, and Local levels, the victims were able to receive assistances and to communicate their needs once the disaster service providers were set up and ready to serve a few days later such as all audio-based equipment was available to set up, all audio-based communications through radio and public broadcast announcement were available to convey messages out to the public, and all police/fire personnel were able to understand and give instructions with misplaced population. Thousands of people went to the Louisiana Superdome, shelters, and other temporary sites. However, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population that were not depending on any of these equipment/communication broadcasts effectively because simply, they could not hear what they were saying. Therefore, the information was lost in time of critical assistance is needed.

1. Louisiana Superdome has phone booths available for people to make calls, to locate their family members, etc. For Deaf and Hard of Hearing population, they did not have that luxury of communication access until weeks later when the Hamilton Relay company went there to set up so Deaf and Hard of Hearing community can use them for communication, the same and basic reason as hearing people needed to that were already done many days or weeks earlier.
2. Interpreting services were not provided until much later in weeks at the Louisiana Superdome as well as various shelters where a large group of Deaf members were staying.
3. There was very significant lack of coordination on the 1st Responders' and emergency related not-for-profit organizations' part to ensure that communication is accessible to the population according to the Americans with Disabilities Act. A number of lessons learned are as follows:
 - Dr. Benjamin J. Soukup, CEO of one of the largest non-profit human service organization for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in North America, CSD, said "*We recognize that people who are deaf or hard of hearing are often overlooked in disaster recovery and rescue efforts, and we are working hard to ensure that this does not happen with Hurricane Katrina. CSD of Oklahoma is working closely with the local Red Cross and other appropriate organizations, and they will be able to provide assistance.*" Source: www.icdri.org

- "We are heartbroken seeing all the devastation that Katrina has brought upon people in the Gulf States, especially those who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and late-deafened," said Cheryl Heppner, Executive Director of Northern Virginia Resources Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons.
- Heppner added, *".....we are eager to work with organizations and agencies to ensure that people who are deaf or hard of hearing get the services they need, especially hearing aids or other devices vital to effective communication. At a time when their lives are turned upside down, we hope the last thing worry about is how they will be able to communicate with others."* Source: www.icdri.org
- The Washington Times published the article, **"Katrina Reveals Lack of Resources to Evacuate Deaf"**, October 5, 2005. The article is about the deaf population that experienced lack of resources received from the emergency agencies over communication channels. Basically, they just followed others to evacuate that may not be recommended by the emergency personnel.
- Cheryl Heppner, CEO of the North Virginia Resources Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons based in Fairfax, VA summarized for its publication about the Federal Communication Commission's panel discussion on communications during Hurricane Katrina.

Hurricane Katrina Panel - March 7, 2006

Several representatives of national organizations on behalf of Deaf and Hard of Hearing population participated in the discussion such as Deaf and Hard of Hearing Consumers Advocacy Network (DHHCAN), a coalition of, by, and for deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and deaf-blind consumers, Association of Late-Deafened Adults, Telecommunication for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, etc.

They pointed out that the resources were not available during the Katrina crisis. A number of examples are listed below.

Cheryl Heppner's remarks:

- "Katrina took away our communication strategies and tools (moisture was the enemy of hearing aids and cochlear implants, we were unable to reach interpreters, transliterators, CART providers, SSPs due to power outages and loss of telecommunications)"
- "Television: visual information not provided"
- "Radios: often the one source of communication, but may be useless to people who have more than mild/moderate hearing loss."
- "Telecommunications: devices wouldn't work due to power outages, relay service numbers were inoperable in LA and MS, relay providers struggled to get permission to install equipment in shelters"
- "Lessons from Katrina: The need for redundancy, devices that can work with off-the-shelf batteries, better equipped shelters and shelter training The need for integration of deaf and hard of hearing persons at all levels to be involved in emergency planning, equipment testing, disaster exercises, training, volunteer work The importance of community."

- “based organizations such as deaf ministries, schools for the deaf, agencies and organizations dedicated to serving deaf and hard of hearing people.”

Hilary Styron’s remarks:

- “Areas hit hardest had nearly 25% disabled population; New Orleans had over 23,000 people with a sensory disability
- The National Organization on Disability’s SNAKE teams found over 80% of shelters didn’t have access to TTY communications; 60% did not have captioning displayed on TV screens
- 911 system, Emergency Alerting System (EAS) and radio/TV are three sources for emergency communications - some were not activated, some were destroyed, some were not implemented
- TV stations must get over the notion that helping most of the people is good enough when the law requires information to be available to all
- FCC regulations give discretion to determine what constitutes an emergency; perhaps if EAS were activated even TV broadcasters would have recognized Katrina’s importance
- A recommendation that after Presidential declaration of disaster, everything given verbally about an event must be accessible
- A recommendation that TV stations should contact captioning services before emergency coverage, post reminders on TV sets in their newsroom to contact captioning service (with a number to call), have a speed dial button on a phone with a connection to a captioning service.
- A recommendation that a station should distribute its emergency visual presentation policy to all employees every 6 months and incorporate it into annual news employee training.
- A recommendation that phone banks in federally funded shelters should not be permitted unless there is also access to TTY, video relay service.”

The Historic Flood of Rhode Island (March-April 2010)

Lesson learned here in Rhode Island

1. No emergency captioning was provided by two out of 3 major TV News stations in Rhode Island.
2. Deaf tenants were ordered to evacuate their home (apartment units) without clear explanation. They were told what not to bring but later, they wish they could bring them. They went to the shelters. There was no interpreter, no captioning on TV, nor no telecommunication access for them to make contacts with their family members.
3. Deaf homeowners experienced flooding in their basements, one of them, a full of sewage from the public sewage system. No communication between the public officials and homeowners had been established to discuss on a number of remedies. They had to depend on their children, some were adults, for communication.
4. RICDHH prepared freelance interpreters for this type of emergencies but not many emergency agencies requested for the service. Insurance companies and Federal Assistance programs included not to bother hiring interpreters for those deaf and hard of hearing homeowners who

wished to file the claims. Education and Training are needed to benefit these services in order to gain communication access.

5. Lack of Emergency Alert Notification System to alert the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ACCESS ON STATE PROPERTIES

A number of state properties such as (public accommodation) Providence Airport, RI Convention Center, Dunkin Donuts Center, Memorial Auditorium, and (services) all state departments and agencies like Department of Motor Vehicles, Department of Public Safety, Department of Administration, State House, and many more, all are subject to federal laws, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 if applicable, and Americans with Disabilities Act of Title II and III if applicable. Currently, they are not up to par to ensure that communication is accessible to deaf and hard of hearing population.

Lack of Resources as noted is listed below:

1. Visual Paging/Announcing System to convey messages either emergency or general information to public on the premises.
2. The videophones/amplifications on phones used for public use.
3. Remote Communication Access Services (Interpreters and CART)

Example:

PVD TF Green Airport – the flights change all the times. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people are not notified of these changes until they become suspicious of situation that may occur like observing people leaving from the original gate to the different gate or observing an increased number of people lining up at the desk for assistance. They have to wait until their turn in the line, just to find out what's happening with the flight. (changes, delays, etc.)

RI Convention Center – TTYs are available but 95% of deaf and hard of hearing people are not using them anymore. Updates are needed to reflect current technologies for communication needs especially for emergencies.

Department of Labor and Training- a number of deaf and hard of hearing unemployed were seeking to file claims for unemployment benefits but they are required to make a call on site to let them in for applications. The site is not accessible.

State House – sign language interpreters are not available all the times and they do not have back up plans such as Remote Communication Access Services to be provided. No coordination or plan is being developed.

A PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE BILL

This bill was introduced in the legislative session twice and it will be tried again in the 2012 Legislative Session. It will take time for state legislators to understand why this is very important and how it is funded. It would not tap on state dollars because it will be funded from the Relay fund to support the program.

2012

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2011

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Introduced By:

Date Introduced:

Referred To:

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 39-1-42 of the General Laws in Chapter 39-1 entitled "Public Utilities Commission" is hereby amended to read as follows:

39-1-42. Access to telephone information services for persons with disabilities. -- (a)

The public utilities commission shall establish, administer and promote an information accessibility service that includes:

(1) A statewide telephone relay service and, through the competitive bidding process, contract for the administration and operation of such a relay system for utilization of the telecommunications network by deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired persons;

(2) The adaptive telephone equipment loan program capable of servicing the needs of persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or those with neuromuscular

impairments for use with a single party telephone line, to any subscriber who is certified as deaf, hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or with neuromuscular impairments by a licensed physician, audiologist, speech pathologist, or a qualified state agency, pursuant to chapter 23 of this title; and

(3) A telephone access to the text of newspaper programs to residents who are blind, deaf or blind, visually impaired, or reading impaired with a single party telephone line.

(b) The commission shall establish, by rule or regulation, an appropriate funding mechanism to recover the costs of providing this service from each residence and business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including PBX trunks and centrex equivalent trunks and each service line or trunk, and upon each user interface number or extension number or similarly identifiable line, trunk, or path to or from a digital network. Notwithstanding the foregoing, there shall not be any additional funding mechanism used to charge each from each residence and business telephone access line or truck in the state, including PBX trunks and centrex equivalent trunks and each service line or trunk, or upon each user interface number or extension number or similarly identifiable line, trunk or path to or from a digital network, to recover the costs of providing the services outlined in subsections (a)(1), (2) or (3) above.

(c) The commission, with the assistance of the state commission on the deaf and hard of hearing, shall also develop the appropriate rules, regulations and service standards necessary to implement the provisions of subsection (a)(1) of this section. At a minimum, however, the commission shall require, under the terms of the contract, that the relay service provider:

(1) Offer its relay services seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day, including holidays;

(2) Hire only qualified salaried operators with deaf language skills; and

(3) Maintain the confidentiality of all communications.

(d) [Deleted by P.L. 2004, ch. 504, section 3.]

(e) The commission shall collect from the telecommunications service providers, the amounts of the surcharge collected from their subscribers and remit to the department of human services an additional ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) annually commencing in fiscal year 2005 for the adaptive telephone equipment loan program, and forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to the department of human services for the establishment of a new telephone access to the text of newspaper programs, and \$80,000 be remitted to the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing annually for emergency and public communication access program within the state, in coherence with Section 23-1.8-4. The surcharge referenced hereunder shall be generated from existing funding mechanisms and shall not be generated as a result of any new funding mechanisms charged to each residence and business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including PBX trunks and centrex equivalent trunks and each service line or trunk, or upon each user interface number or extension number or similarly identifiable line, trunk or path to or from a digital network.

SECTION 2. Chapter 23-1.8 of the General Laws entitled "Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

23-1.8-4. Emergency and public communication access fund. –

(a) There is established the emergency and public communication access fund("EPCA fund"), which shall be utilized to create emergency and public communication access program for deaf and hard of hearing people, in coherence with subsection 39-1-42(e).

(b) The fund shall help to enhance emergency communication system to alert deaf and hard of hearing people to any type of emergencies in the state. The commission shall be required to collaborate with the department of public safety for procedures and enhancements of the emergency communication system as well as other agencies if needed to achieve emergency communication.

(c) The fund shall purchase and install public telecommunication and general communication access equipment and products at public sites for the deaf and hard of hearing citizens.

(d) The commission is authorized to establish, administer and promote its emergency and public communication access program.

(e) The commission is authorized to make purchases specifically for the EPCA program and empowered to receive donations and grants from sources including, but not limited to, the federal government, governmental and private foundations, and corporate and individual donors; these donations and grants to be deposited in the EPCA fund.

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

EXPLANATION

BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

OF

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

This act would establish the emergency and public communication access fund to create an emergency and public communication access program for the deaf and hard of hearing.

This act would take effect upon passage.

BUDGET

\$80,000 is determined based on the fact that the current statute authorizes the RI Department of Human Services to receive \$40,000 from the Relay fund used specifically for the Newspaper Services for the Blind. This amount is not used for an emergency and its population is significantly smaller than the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. \$80,000 is reasonable amount requested considering more than 90,000 people living in Rhode Island plus additional 10% of daily commuters from Connecticut and Massachusetts and plus 10% of those who came for businesses and visits. All combined are totally depending on communication access for any types of emergencies. Nearly half of \$80,000 will be used to pay for a part-time staff (20-25 hours a week) to coordinate the EPCA program through contract. RICDHH has 3 FTEs but all are tied to their responsibilities and duties on a full-time basis and they would not be able to handle an additional program. This program is required to be achieved in order to be compliant with the federal and state laws and to carry out well-rehearsed missions using equipment and resources for deaf and hard of hearing population in Rhode Island.

Part-Time State Emergency Coordinator for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing					
	<u>Weeks</u>	<u>Hours</u>	<u>Mark-Up</u>	<u>Length</u>	
	40	25	17%	12 mos/yr	
\$ 40,000.00	1000	\$ 34.00	5.78	39.78	
	Total:	\$ 39.78	\$39,780.00		
\$ 35,000.00	1000	\$ 30.00	5.1	35.1	
	Total:	\$ 35.10	\$35,100.00		

The program will have its advisory committee to assist the staff to determine what priority should be addressed in the given year, Year 2, and Year 3. The funds would not be used to cover all equipment in a year but rather to allocate a certain amount to cover a number of items prioritized by the advisory committee, as long as it is within the budget every year.

NOTE: The remaining budget will be spent on equipment, training, materials, travels, conference, etc.

Examples:

One LED Equipment - \$6,000 to \$8,000

Video Remote Interpreting Services - \$5,000

One training session for first emergency responders (20) - \$10,000

Smoke/Carbon Monoxide Fire Alarms w Strobe (bulk) - \$10,000

CONCERNS OF USING RELAY FUNDS

5 state agencies serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Arizona, North Carolina, New Mexico, Virginia, and Washington) are relying on up to 100% of the Relay fund to support the personnel and operation of the office and to cover the expenditures of the Relay Services and Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program because they have direct responsibility to oversee all of these programs.

Additional 4 state agencies serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, and Nevada) receive more than 24% (variety) to support various programs from the Relay fund such as Equipment Distribution program, court interpreting referral program, etc.

If the legislation is passed, it would be only 16% of the RICDHH budget that is coming from the Relay fund.

EPCA PROGRAM AT GLANCE

STAFFING

The qualification for this position would be a person who has strong and in-depth background in working with various emergency issues and projects and/or various public (state or local) services in the best interest of Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. Knowledge of American Sign Language would be a plus but not required. This person is familiar with the difference between Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and their needs and is familiar with the latest technologies that are available and can be used for emergencies or public accommodation.

This person is expected to work with Department of Health, Department of Public Safety, Governor's Office, Lt. Governor's Office, Department of Administration, Department of Labor and Training, quasi-agencies such as Red Cross, Rhode Island Volunteers, and many more depending on projects to be pursued.

This person shall possess interpersonal skills, public speaking skills, organizing skills, and self-starters with less depending on instructions given from the Executive Director of the RICDHH.

This position will report to the Executive Director and will work with newly established Advisory Committee very closely in order to carry out goals and objectives promulgated by the Advisory Committee. This position is responsible to coordinate the program entirely and be the point of contact for any issues under this program.

This position is between 20 to 25 hours a week and it should not exceed \$40,000 of the EPCA's annual budget.

EQUIPMENT

Most equipment may be useful for emergencies as well as public accommodations. The equipment is listed below. The cost of each item is usually expensive and varied. The block grants may be considered to allow the non-profit organizations to distribute equipment on behalf of the RICDHH.

1. Emergency Visual Paging Equipment
2. LED Display Equipment for Visual Captioning
3. Assistive Listening Devices (Pocket-Talkers, FM Loops, etc.)
4. Videophones used by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
5. Video Relay Services
6. Video Remote Interpreting
7. CART Remote Services
8. Laptops or Tablets for shelters and walk-in sites.
9. Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Strobe (powerful flashing light)
10. And many more.

NEW UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES:

1. Wi-fi or Internet Protocol Based Equipment purchased for video remote interpreting/cart services for all “walk-in” services.

Ideals:

- ✓ Emergency Shelters
- ✓ Division of Motor Vehicles
- ✓ Division of Taxation
- ✓ Department of Health – Vital Records and Grievance Unit
- ✓ Division of Unemployment Benefits
- ✓ State Capitol Police
- ✓ University Security (URI, RIC, and CCRI)
- ✓ Network RI
- ✓ State Court – fines, fees, etc. (not the court proceedings.)
- ✓ And other opportunities.

TRAINING/EDUCATION

This program is to train people to learn how to recognize the communication needs of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and how to develop the emergency plan for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. This makes a critical difference.

1. Train the 1st Responders and disaster service providers. (EMT, Red Cross, Rhode Island Volunteers, etc.)
2. Train all Emergency Management Agency staff (state and local) and municipal police and fire
3. Train the trainers.
4. Train policy makers to develop plans that provide quality services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population.
5. Host the Bi-Biennial Conference specifically on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing topics
6. Consumer Education Series.
7. Public Awareness through various avenue means.
8. Factsheets and Preparedness materials.

PUBLICATION/OUTREACH

1. The website will be available dedicated to emergency services to deaf and hard of hearing population including English and American Sign Language.
2. TV advertisement about the number of people who experience hearing loss and encourage people to consider this targeted population for planning.
3. Create E-mail blasts for regular news and updates.
4. Attend all conferences related to emergencies and all conferences/workshops for the deaf and hard of hearing to reach this audience.
5. Public Awareness through various avenue means.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

1. Telecommunication for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.
2. CEPIN – Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network.
3. Department of Public Safety (E-911, Emergency Management Agency, etc.)
4. Rhode Island Special Needs Emergency Registry.
5. State Departments and Agencies.
6. 39 Municipal Police and Fire.
7. EMTs
8. Independent Living Centers
9. Deaf and Hard of Hearing organizations
10. And many more.

MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM

Emergency Communication Access

- Evaluation of the Training - % of overall training
- Number of training (consumers and providers) per year
- Number of participants for training
- Number of State Agencies involved per year
- Number of projects are worked on per year
- Number of items purchased
- Number of technical assistance provided
- Number of smoke and carbon monoxide alarm with light strobes distributed

Public Communication Access

- Number of equipment purchased
- Number of “walk-in” sites that need this service.
- Number of training
- Number of participants
- Number of sites that are benefited from this program per year
- Number of Public Awareness efforts
- Number of Consumers participated in training
- Number of Consumers serviced

GLOSSARY

American Sign Language (ASL) – It is the 3rd or 4th largest language used in the United States. It is a primary, visual, natural and structured language used by the Deaf people. ASL has a linguistic structure of grammars, syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics as well as other rules of language. The language is expressed and conveyed through a combination of facial expressions, hands, fingers, head, and limbs. This language is completely separate and distinct from English. They are usually bilinguals (Sign ASL and Read/Write English)

CapTel – It is the latest technology used by Hard of Hearing and Late-Deafened people that can hear the voice callers' voice and read their comments through text form simultaneously and they can speak back themselves.

CART - Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is a word-for-word, speech-to-text translation service for people who need communication access. Unlike computerized note-taking or abbreviation systems which summarize information for consumers, CART provides a complete, near-instantaneous translation of all spoken words and environmental sounds.

Cochlear Implant User – People who wear and depend on cochlear implant to acquire information for communication and/or environmental recognition/incidentals. They could be ASL users and/or able to speak for themselves.

Deaf – People who could not hear and utilize ASL extensively. They are part of Deaf Culture that has common beliefs, arts, literatures, history, and values known as a Deaf Identity.

deaf – It is a label for the audiological condition with a lower case of "d". Some, if not all, sounds are not recognized by a natural hearing function.

Deaf-Blind – People who are Deaf are also legally blind. They, who are depending on ASL, need tactile interpreting service to acquire information and, use SSP service for maneuvering and for environmental information.

English – It is a common language used by the larger society in the United States. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people use and understand English in various forms such as reading, writing, oral, hearing, or manual communication.

EPCAP – It is an acronym for Emergency and Public Communication Access Program.

Hard of Hearing – People who could not hear very well tend to rely on hearing aids and/or other assistive listening devices to acquire information and they tend to speak on their own.

Hearing Aids User – People who wear and depend on hearing aids to acquire information for communication and/or environmental recognition/incidentals. They could be ASL users and/or able to speak for themselves.

Interpreter – *Interpreter is a certified and trained professional that can interpret from one language to other language. I.e. ASL to English, Spanish to English, etc.*

Late-Deafened – *People who had normal hearing when they were born experience hearing loss later in their lifetime. They use all resources to remain active independence including ASL, hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening devices, etc.*

Public – *Public is, for this case, referred to all properties owned by the State of Rhode Island.*

Remote CART - *A method by which the CART Provider is in one location and the consumer is in another. The consumer may be attending the communication event or the communication event may be at a third location. The CART Provider listens to one or more voices via a telephone line or other audio connection and transmits the verbatim text to the remote location via the internet. Remote CART is useful to consumers in geographical areas in which there is a shortage of CART Providers.*

RICDHH – *It is an acronym for the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.*

Special Population or Deaf and Hard of Hearing Population – *It is referring to a population of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, Late-Deafened, Cochlear Implant users, various languages used, various manual communications, etc.*

SSP – *A Support Service Provider (SSP) provides visual and environmental information, human guide service, access to information, so that a deaf-blind individual is empowered to make his or her own informed decisions. SSPs are trained professionals. Source credited from the New Jersey Coalition on Deafblindness.*

TTY/TDD – *Text Telephone (TTY) or Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) is a piece of equipment used by deaf people to make phone calls.*

Videophone – *It is the latest technology used by ASL users to make phone calls via the video relay service (VRS) and it can be used for point-to-point calls.*

VRI – *It is an acronym for the Video Remote Interpreting. A method by which the interpreter is in one location and the consumer is in another. The consumer may be attending the communication event or the communication event may be at a third location. The interpreter watches to one who sign ASL via screen of webcam or videophone over the internet or wireless network and speak to the voice caller/user. The consumer and voice user converse in the same room but the interpreter is in the remote location. VRI is useful to consumers in geographical areas in which there is a shortage of interpreters and consumers who prefer to use VRI for whatever reasons.*

VRS – *It is an acronym for the Video Relay Service. The service is provided when the consumer wishes to make a phone call using VRS. The interpreter watches to one who sign ASL via screen of webcam or videophone over the internet or wireless network and speak to the voice caller. Basically, the interpreter facilitates communication between the consumer and voice callers through English and ASL over the phone.*

CONTACT INFORMATION

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